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Recouping Under Reagan CIA Is on the Rebound

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The Central Intelligence Agency, whose public image and private morale have been battered during much of the past decade, appears to be regaining some of its lost money, manpower and maneuvering room under the Reagan administration.

In Director William J. Casey, a long-time friend and political adviser to President Reagan, the agency has perhaps more clout in the White House than ever.

In its deputy director, Adm. Bobby Ray Inman, the former chief of the super-secret National Security Agency, the CIA has one of the nation's most-respected professional intelligence officers to brush up the analytical product and keep tabs on technological prowess. Some senior CIA officials believe that Casey, 68, may not stay in his post for Reagan's entire four-year term and that Inman is heir apparent.

In Vice President Bush, the agency has another godfather at the highest levels of government. Bush, a CIA director under President Ford who is, according to agency officials, very proud of his days at the agency, played a key role during the transition period in helping turn Reagan toward the CIA.

Bush, insiders say, convinced a reluctant president-elect Reagan to let the CIA brief him every day on the global intelligence picture — even when he was in California — so that the president would quickly develop a feel for the evolution of events rather than be exposed only to special or occasional situations.

CIA's secret, multibillion-dollar budget is going up substantially. Though sources say this actually began in the final year of the Carter administration after events in Iran and Afghanistan, it is clear that it will keep going up under Reagan.

Officials say the agency, for the first time in years, has money to hire analytical specialists for areas of the world previously neglected, for more linguists, and to pay for more trips abroad by analysts.

The agency is destined, covert as ever, is supposed to be experienced people.

Sources say it also began in the 1970s, when it overcame the criticisms that official President Mond committee head that investigator mid-1970s.

Casey, many of the agency's claim last month businessman who campaign, as CIA caused much grumbling throughout the intelligence community.

Hugel has no experience in spy operations, but his post is the most sensitive in the CIA and involves overseeing the agency's entire overseas spying operations. Many intelligence officers, active and retired, were aghast at putting an amateur in such a job, while a few others thought it mostly an attempt to jolt the crusty world of spying with some business world experience.

But things have quieted down and one veteran intelligence officer offers a different way to view the appointment. In this view, Casey, a high-ranking officer overseeing intelligence operations in Europe in World War II, wants to run the clandestine operations himself and wants only a trusted friend between him and the operations.

Whether this means that CIA eventually will return to its heyday of covert intervention abroad, including assassination attempts, as well as its occasional dabbling in domestic activities on the fringe of its charter, is not known.

While the improvement in the overall situation at CIA is seen by many officials as necessary to bolster U.S. intelligence, the largest problem for the agency, and for the government and citizenry as well, may come in keeping the CIA from once again going too far afield within an atmosphere far more congenial than that of the mid-1970s.

The key document that is supposed to define what the CIA can and cannot do is Executive Order 12036, put into effect by President Carter three years ago as an outgrowth of the Senate committee investigation.